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CIA work in U.S. 'risky': ex-chief

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WASHINGTON—Former CIA director Stansfield F. Turner on Tuesday criticized as "risky" President Reagan's decision to let U.S. intelligence agencies conduct covert operations in this country, including spying on Americans.

"The CIA is not trained to operate within the constraints of American law," Turner said. "That's the FBI's role, and they're well-trained for it."

By broadening the CIA's authority to use secret means to collect foreign intelligence from unsuspecting Americans here and abroad, the Reagan administration is risking mistakes by undertrained CIA officers and unwarranted intrusions into the lives of citizens, he said.

Turner, a retired admiral who served as President Jimmy Carter's top spymaster, said he fears that excesses on the part of the CIA might generate a debilitating storm of criticism as severe as that of the mid-1970s.

"I don't think the agency could stand another go-around of that sort," he told reporters at a breakfast discussion.

Turner said, however, that the tone of Reagan's executive order on intelligence gathering is an "improvement" on Carter's far more restrictive decree of Jan. 24, 1978.

Its wording conveys the idea that "we want good intelligence and here's how we're going to get it," he said.

Last Friday, Reagan eased many of the restrictions on intelligence activities after months of backstage negotiations between the White House and the congressional intelligence committees, which oversee the work of the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

Turner called these negotiations "extraordinary" and asserted that they actually undermined the process of congressional oversight.

No public hearings were held on the Reagan executive order, he noted. Congress never took a vote on it.